

The Bridge



Connecting New England's Emergency Management Communities

November 2006 • Issue 1

Director's Vision

As FEMA's new Region I Director, I can tell you that we are committed to enhancing our state emergency management partnerships throughout New England. Bringing the perspective of a former state emergency manager, I know the importance of establishing a regional, all-hazards emergency management system of preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. We can accomplish this through close working relationships with federal, state, tribal and local governments; business, industry and volunteer organizations. Since Hurricane Katrina, FEMA has been redoubling its efforts to communicate more proactively with the states. This newsletter is just one of the ways FEMA will be reaching out to you. I envision it as a tool to help address the issues important to all of us – a resource and exchange of information tailored to your needs. Enjoy.



Arthur W. Cleaves

Arthur W. Cleaves
Director, FEMA Region I



Finger on the Pulse – Situational Awareness Enhanced

The FEMA Region I Operational Planning Unit is publishing a daily situational awareness report in collaboration with the six New England State Emergency Operation Centers. The shift toward expanded situational awareness in the region enhances the states' and FEMA's ability to plan for and respond to disasters in New England. The intent of this new report is to provide consistent information pertaining to any event that may require supplemental state or federal assistance.

The situational awareness report is published Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. In order to facilitate the publication, FEMA staff were granted access to several State WEB EOC portals. For states that are not using WEB EOC or that are limiting FEMA access, collaboration with state operations officers will be conducted by other means such as telephone and e-mail. Our intent is to minimize the impact on State Emergency Management standard operating procedures.

Any information obtained from news, weather broadcasts, or any source other than a state emergency management agency will first be verified with the appropriate state before distribution.

Bolstered situational awareness monitoring will allow for a more constant flow of information and create the ability to provide situational data at a moment's notice. Future plans are to

employ automation tools that would send situational updates to portable electronic communication devices.

The Operational Planning Unit is available at 978-461-5400 or via e-mail at FEMA-R01-ROC-PLANS@DHS.GOV. The Maynard MOC, 978-461-5501, will serve as point of contact for situational awareness information from 4:00 pm to 7:00 am Monday through Friday, and on Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays. The MOC e-mail is FEMA-MOC-MAYNARD@DHS.GOV.

“New England states are leaders in the nation with providing immediate emergency management situational awareness.”

-FEMA Director David Paulison

The 2007 Farmers' Almanac contains some chilly predictions for the upcoming winter. For New England, unseasonably cold or “shivery” conditions are expected. Snow, and lots of it, is also forecast for parts of New England.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is process; working together is success.” -Henry Ford



(From left: Christopher M. Pope, Director, New Hampshire Department of Fire & Safety Emergency Management; Robert Warren, Executive Director, Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency; James “Skip” Thomas, Commissioner, Connecticut Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security; Ed Fratto, Executive Director, Northeast States Emergency Consortium; Charles Jacobs, Acting Director, Maine Emergency Management Agency; David Paulison, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Cristine McCombs, Director, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency; Art Cleaves, Director, FEMA Region I)

Directors’ Roundtable

FEMA Director David Paulison visited the Region I office in Boston on October 20. During his visit, Paulison, along with Region I Director Art Cleaves, met with nearly all of the state emergency management directors in New England. The unique gathering brought together emergency management heads from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island along with the Executive Director of the Northeast States Emergency Consortium. The directors exchanged useful ideas about working alongside FEMA during a disaster. Paulison encouraged state emergency managers to be up front about their disaster needs and pledged to work closely with the states to ensure that FEMA will meet all needs within its power when there is a federal disaster declaration. “We need to join as partners. We aren’t coming in to take over. We want to stand by your side so that we can put the resources you need on the ground (in the event of a disaster),” said Paulison.

Congrats Cris

Cristine McCombs, the Regional Vice President for the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), was recently appointed chair of the National Legislative Committee. As chair, she will lead this NEMA sub-committee as it considers which emergency related issues from all 54 states and territories should be addressed by Congress.

The Legislative Committee has had an extremely busy and productive year in the wake of Hurricane Katrina due to intense Congressional interest and scrutiny of FEMA and emergency management overall. With the Legislative Committee being one of the key organizations that influences major Congressional changes affecting emergency management and FEMA, Cris will have a challenging and extremely demanding job.

Nation’s First Adaptation of a Metropolitan Medical Response System

The Northern New England Metropolitan Medical Response System (NNE MMRS) is charged with preparing for and coordinating the medical response should a mass casualty event occur in Maine, New Hampshire or Vermont. It is the nation’s first multi-state medical response coordination system.

Recent events, such as Hurricane Katrina and the potential threat of avian flu have underscored the need for improved national planning and response efforts in natural disasters and disease epidemics. The MMRS, a DHS/FEMA program, is designed to enhance the ongoing coordination among the three states. A crucial aspect of this

is that the states’ strike teams retain their individual focus while the MMRS allows for regionalization and collaboration. One example is the development of three medical strike teams, one in each state, which can be called upon during a mass casualty event or disaster. The strike teams are made up of doctors, nurses and EMTs who volunteer to be part of the team. The individuals have signed agreements with their employers and when deployed act as state assets. The teams are made up of 90-100 members, with the assumption that that one third will be available at any given time. The teams are activated by their respective states, but by training together and maintaining compatible communications systems, they will be better able to function together during an event. Memoranda of understanding which detail the relationships and expectations between the states and NNE MMRS have been signed.

The five essential elements of the MMRS include: coordinated planning, coordinated training and education, cross-border coordination, building pharmaceutical caches, and developing medical strike teams. For more information contact Olan Johnston at olan.a.johnston@dartmouth.edu.

What’s Online

Get the latest news, fact sheets on policy, programs, overview of operations and FEMA-related stories at www.fema.gov/media/index.

Partner Playback

Each quarter we will feature an organization or unit which represents FEMA's focus on partnerships. To be considered for placement in this section, please submit a 150-250 word write-up to Cheryl Kitts at cheryl.kitts@dhs.gov. Photos will be accepted and included contingent upon space availability.



BOSTON -- Two Massachusetts-based Coast Guard assets, a 47-foot motor lifeboat from Coast Guard Station Gloucester and a Jayhawk helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod, transit out of Gloucester Harbor during a training exercise Aug. 25, 2005. USCG photo/Luke Pinneo

Like dozens of other Coast Guard stations throughout the United States, the missions of Station Gloucester include search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine safety and homeland defense. Station Gloucester's staff fluctuates between 40 to 48 full-time staff and 20 to 30 part-time reservists.

Coast Guard Station Gloucester shares the fishing pier with the fleet that became famous in the movie "The Perfect Storm." The station has four boats: a 47' motor life boat, a 41' utility boat, and two 25' response boats.

When asked how the crew was able to maintain its normal operations while responding to the floods, Coast Guard Chief Robert C. Breaker, a Boatswain's mate and former chief of operations at the station replied, "Because we had outstanding crewmembers who saw a need, wanted to help their community, and stepped up to the plate. They are young people doing great things."

Coast Guard Station Gloucester

The crew at Coast Guard Station Gloucester in Gloucester, Mass., is accustomed to being on the water. But on May 17, 2006, its personnel played a significant role on land by responding valiantly to the Mother's Day Floods of 2006.

The severe flooding, which began May 12, led to a federal disaster declaration for Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk counties in Massachusetts.

The station has had a long-standing agreement with the city of Gloucester to provide disaster assistance when needed. When the call for help came, the station crew immediately sprang into action.

Working with the Gloucester Fire Department, station personnel filled more than 1,000 sandbags to help control flooding at an elementary school in Gloucester which was being used as an evacuation area for local residents.

The station command, led by Commanding Officer Jeane J. Gibson, recalled all of its cooks as well as several reservists to keep its galley open 24 hours for a period of two days in order to feed first responders involved with response and recovery operations.



The Gloucester Fisherman's Memorial honors those lost at sea and is a symbol of the community. FEMA Photo/Brian Hvinden

Did you know?

On December 29, 1959, several thousand families were evacuated from coastal Mass. due to abnormally high tides (highest in 108 yrs.) and gale force winds combined with a full moon. Water 8- feet deep flooded Hull streets and a 100-foot section of the Nantucket Beach parking lot was torn out to a depth of 10-feet by wave action.

FEMA-Military partnership strengthened by Defense Coordination Team

By Colonel Frank Kosich, Defense Coordinating Officer, Region I

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the 2006 Homeland Security Symposium in Colorado Springs. One particular session saw Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant of the US Coast Guard, discussing their efforts to build the 21st century Coast Guard. While he did not speak to his role as Principal Federal Officer for the Katrina response effort, he stated that if he ever wrote about his experiences in the Gulf, he already had a title selected. He would call it "Bayou 1." Some in the audience understood the connection; most did not. He was referring to Desert 1, the failed attempt to rescue hostages from Iranian extremists that took place during the Carter administration. Desert 1 was a watershed event for the Department of Defense as it illuminated glaring deficiencies in the ability of the Services to operate jointly, and led to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which mandated actions that would enhance our joint warfighting capability. With few words and a simple analogy, Admiral Allen's message was clear; that the Katrina response may well prove to be a watershed event with respect to federal agencies working jointly to deliver support to disaster response efforts when and where needed.

Following the Hurricane Katrina experience, it became clear that federal agencies saw the need to improve the interagency process and move towards a more collaborative environment in which capabilities are leveraged in a manner that optimizes them. There are dozens of federal agencies that have something to contribute to federal and state efforts to plan, prepare for, and respond to disasters. What do these agencies have in common? They seek partnerships with federal and state agencies, they share common goals, and they share responsibilities with respect to delivering capabilities to those leading response efforts in order to save lives and minimize human suffering and



damage. DoD's decision to man a full-time Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) with a small planning team (Defense Coordinating Element or DCE) in each FEMA Region is evidence that they recognize the need to partner more closely with FEMA and also that they take seriously their role in supporting civil authorities. To that end, establishing DCOs full-time in each FEMA Region allows DoD to actively participate in the interagency process with a goal of enhancing readiness across the board.

The DCO concept is not new. DCOs have always been a part of the landscape when DoD assets are needed. Their pre-activation involvement, however, has been limited, particularly in planning, preparedness, and mitigation activities -- primarily because those who served as DCOs held primary duties as Training Support Brigade Commanders missioned to train and mobilize Army Reserve units. Hence, DCO duties were an additional responsibility.

Today the mission of the DCO is solely one of support to civil authorities throughout all phases of planning and response. The DCO and staff work hand in hand with the FEMA Regional Director and staff to develop relationships throughout the Region, gain situational awareness of the Region, its issues and challenges, and plan for potential requests for and employment of DoD capabilities in response to an event necessitating activation of the DCO. In doing so, the DCO and DCE leverage the talents and capabilities of the Region's Emergency Planning Liaison Officers (EPLOs) to stay connected to the state's emergency management and National Guard leadership, and enhance the team's planning and validation of mission requests when activated. The EPLOs are a valued asset to the entire team.

Your DCE team in Region I is delighted to be joining a team of professionals committed to continual improvement and demonstrating genuine concern for those they serve. We will strive to be value added, to be a planning and response multiplier in State and Regional efforts to enhance readiness. Proud to be here, proud to serve.

Don't miss...

Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC) meeting on 12/14 at the FRC in Maynard, MA. An External Affairs workshop will run in conjunction with the RISC meeting – all are welcome to attend. For more information contact Tim McCoy at timothy.mccoy1@dhs.gov.

Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) training will take place at the FEMA regional office on 1/9 & 10. For more information on the course contact Peter Rennert at peter.rennert@dhs.gov.